The Log of The Seven Bells Club

By Charles Dryden.

In Which Is Depicted the Late Tom Codder's Monument and How He Got It

FOR the better part of ten hours Postmaster General Dix, of Samboa, sat resting his hands and feet in the rocker on his front veranda. The mail blew in semi-monthly and blew out again the same day, via the Pacific Ocean. When not eating his meals, the postmaster enjoyed what might be termed a cinch.

Word having fallen on the hearing of Mr. Bloke that the postmaster of Samboa included among his other virtues the art of photography, the tourist jollied himself into calling upon that official. He might pick up a few cabinets depicting cocoanut trees, war scenes, and the nude nobility. There was another reason. When a boy at home in Illinois, Mr. Bloke held the portfolio of postoffice sweep, and he felt that a fraternal bond existed between himself and J. Dix, despite the fact that the Samboan office was never swept. Besides, Willie loved to veiw celebrities, whether at home or abroad, and a postmaster is more or less in the public eye.

When not otherwise engaged, the postmaster sat on the veranda of the two-story frame structure which comprised his office and dwelling. He was rocking to and fro in the cool of the evening when Mr. Bloke butted in through the wicker gate. A pensive little old man was Mr. J. Dix, wearing a troubled face, closely cropped whiskers, streaked with gray, and that fretful air of extreme fatigue noticeable in those who dwell long in torrid zones.

"Good evening, sir," Mr. Bloke remarked. "Any mail for me?"

"When were you here last?" snapped the fatigued P. M.

"Day before yesterday, I think."

"The down steamer touched twelve days ago, and there has been none since," the postmaster said, jerkily. "No, there isn't any mail for you, but I'll look again and again and again, if you insist."

"Please don't go to that trouble," said Willie, somewhat abashed. He took a seat on the edge of the porch and wiped his brow. "I didn't expect any," he feebly added.

"Then why did you ask?" demanded the postmaster, with a furtive side glance at his visitor. "Have you got the post-office habit?"

Mr. Bloke did not reply. This inauspicious prelude to a social call disgusted Willie with himself and made him tired. Ten minutes passed and the strain grew heavier. Mr. Dix dozed spitefully in his big rocking chair. He did not esteem people who had the postoffice habit. Had he known how to do it neatly, Willie would have skiddooed. A fat, green parrot shrieking native lingo and disjointed sea talk in her cage kept up a one-sided conversation with nobody in particular. At length Mr. Bloke ventured to assert that it was a pleasant evening.

"So it is," Mr. Dix remarked absently. "And why shouldn't it be? What's to prevent?"

"Nothing," replied the caller with a feverish show of enthusiasm and groping for a fresh lead on this entertaining topic. "I don't know that I ever saw a finer evening myself. What a funny-looking urn you have there."

The allusion to the urn was little short of inspiration, though Willie was not aware of it when he pointed to a brown cylindrical object not unlike a barrel, resting midway between the fence and porch. On top of the stone stood a small wooden tripod, from which hung a trailing vine growing in a cocoanut shell.

"That's no urn," said the postmaster, awakening to life and ambition.

"What is it, then?" asked the tourist, intensely interested.

"Tom Codder's monument."

"Is he buried in your front yard?"

The postmaster looked distrustfully at Mr. Bloke, and slewed the rocker around so as to face his questioner.

"Didn't you ever hear about Codder?"

"Not a word, though I guess everything else in the way of historical romance has been retailed to me. Did he die there?"

"In that vicinity." The postmaster actually smiled and rubbed his knees. The late Mr. Codder's demise conjured up pleasing reminiscences. "Take an air line—say forty feet above the monument. That's were he died." And cocking his head to one side, Mr. Dix winked.

"I don't understand," Willie stammered. "Your talk is all to the hidden rebus, and I'm no puzzle page editor."

The mysterious Mr. Dix, leaning forward, drew an imaginary loop around his neck with his finger, jerked it taut behind, stuck out his tongue, gasped once or twice and then lapsed into a violent fit of chuckling.

"Oh! I see; you hanged Mr. Codder!"

"Not me alone," the P. M. hastened to explain, his mirth checked for the moment. "No man hangs another single-handed. We strung Tom Codder up—all decent business men, too—and nothing was ever said, because society has a way of making laws for murderers where law of any kind is scarce. That's plain, isn't it?"

"Certainly," Mr. Bloke admitted, "but why did you erect a monument to a murderer?"

Again that droll smile distorted the face of the postmaster.

"It was my idea. I'm here a long while, and Codder's was the first and last execution to date. We always mark stirring epochs. They hanged Codder to a cocoanut tree in my front yard, which wasn't a yard then. When the village grew and the tree got in the way, I sawed it off about a foot from the ground. Then I placed a headless pork barrel over the stump, filled her full of cement and water, and when the stuff hardened I knocked the staves away, and there you have it. I call that a neat memento, and cheap, too."

"Indeed it is," replied Willie, regarding with wondering curiosity the monument and the man on whose mind the lynching seemed to have left an impression, to the exclusion of all else. "It's what I would call neat, but not gaudy."

"Come on and I'll show you the epitaph of the man he killed. Just step this way."

Mr. Bloke followed the length of the narrow garden, expecting every moment to fetch up at the plaster cast of another pork barrel, but they crossed the beach road and stopped at the door of a public house.

"This is where it is," whispered the mysterious Mr. Dix. "You had better order some gin and bitters for two—the folks in here are a bit touchy—and while we're drinking I'll show you the epitaph. Watch my feet."

With his glance focused on the pipe-clayed shoes of Postmaster Dix, and deeply awed by this subtle proceeding, Willie trailed into the dingy bar of the pub. He was still lost in contemplation of the feet of Mr. Dix, watching for the epitaph to apear there after the manner of a stereopticon view, when the publican brought out the square gin bottle. Dix loaded both glasses with a second mate's drink, took a sip of the chemical, nodded at Willie Bloke, and then backed the length of a man away from the counter, where he tapped the floor meaningly with his foot.

In the muddy light of the oil lamps Willie saw nothing at first, but he finally made out the letter F, carved deeply in the hardwood flooring. The inscription, for such it seemed to be, was three inches long, with the tail pointing to the bar. That the epitaph had served there many years was apparent from the rounded edges of the carving. It would have been invisible but for a recent scrubbing of the floor, which gave the dirt-enameled initial a background of white. While Willie was still viewing this collateral exhibit in the career of Tom Codder, deceased, the postmaster sidled up and bestowed a meaning look upon his companion.

"That's where his head hit when he fell after the stabbing. Now, I'll show you the room the vigilantes met in. Come on."

Without stopping to explain whose head had hit there and fired with excitement and gin, Mr. Dix clutched Mr. Bloke by the arm and hurried once more into the road. Turing to the left, he approached the Beach Hotel, and, to the great agitation of Willie, passed into that beanery, through the bar and billiard room, and on to the isolated dining hall beneath the waving palms.

"This man is either a liar, net," mused the tourist, "or one of those chaps who feel that a story, no matter how true, is incomplete without all the corroborative details. Wonder if he always tells it this way, and if my boarding house had anything to do with hanging the gentleman?"

An iridescent tangle of cement, pork barrels, epitaphs and dangling rope, permeated with an aroma of gin and bitters, had slightly buffaloed Mr. Bloke when the postmaster drew up at the door of the dining room. The barefooted native garcon in overalls and nothing else was rearranging the table after the evening meal. Mr. Dix paused on the threshhold and delivered a sweep of the arm.

"In this very room we sat—at that same table—with Herr Bull in the chair. No one said anything, for it was ticklish business, you must admit. All hands just voted—yes or no—on slips of paper and chucked 'em into a hat. I didn't see the ballots myself, but I've heard since that it took three letters to spell every vote. Unanimous, that was, and no mistake. Here's his picture, too," and the now voluble Mr. Dix dragged his puzzled auditor to an artistic photographic group of absconding supercargoes, entitled Sydney Frauds, displayed at the head of the dining hall.

"There he is on the right-hand side of the circle, with his curly black mustache and plastered hair that caught the native girls. He was the kind they fancied, and that smirk simply stunned 'em. If I——"

"Who is this man, anyhow," broke in the bewildered Bloke, who was rapidly losing the thread of a narrative at no time clear owing to the peculiar style of the narrator.

"Tom Codder. Who else could it be?" said the postmaster, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, then, whose head hit the floor where the epitaph is? That is what I want to know."

"His name was Fisher, a trader from the Marshall group, and a decent man, as traders go."

"Now let me get wise to this stunt before you break loose again," said Willie, assuming a proprietary interest in the story for the valid reason he had paid for the gin that set Mr. Dix buzzing. "Codder killed Fisher, whose head struck that spot on the floor marked by a letter F."

"Yes, that's what I said."

"You didn't say so until this minute, but I've surmised these facts or fancies, or whatever they are. Then Codder was hanged to a tree in your front yard—lynched by prominent citizens who met here and voted for violence—and you then embalmed the butt of the tree in cement."

"For once you've got it straight," solemnly declared the postmaster, "and after all my trouble, too. Now I'll show you a photograph of the hanging, taken by myself. Come on back to the house."

On the way back Willie asked Mr. Dix to have some more gin and bitters. He admired the enterprise displayed in photographing a lynching bee on that outlandish isle, and resolved to purchase a copy, cost what it may.

Having successfully absorbed the second round of gin, during which operation the tourist again inspected the epitaph on the floor, the pair re-entered the garden, passed around the post-office and invaded Mr. Dix's sitting room at the rear. An ancient melodeon, on which no one ever played; half a dozen chairs and a high-topped desk, one small table, on which burned a shaded lamp, and a few mats scattered about the floor comprised the furnishings of the room.

"One cannot put on much style with a native housekeeper," Mr. Dix observed, as he noted Willie taking in the layout. "A tattooed woman reared in a bungalow along with pet pigs has domestic ideas of her own. But I'm used to it now," he sighed. "Sit down, Bloke, old man, while I rummage for the picture."

Throwing off his cork helmet and starched coat, the postmaster rummaged much. He pulled out all the drawers in the desk and knocked some musty books from the shelf, after which he stopped to light a pipe and scratch his head for clues.

"When was this photo taken?" Mr. Bloke asked, by way of filling in time.

"More than fifteen years ago."

"And haven't you seen it since?"

"No; but it's in this desk somewhere," he said, hopefully.

Resting and hunting by turns, the postmaster at length turned up the mislaid picture between the leaves of his Bible. It was a faded print, six inches square, in which the last public appearance of Tom Codder was most vividly portrayed. The chief subjects visible in the photo were a tall tree with the spreading tuft of palm at the top and a small white object of human shape outlined against the trunk. What struck Mr. Bloke was the height of this object from the ground, for, as nearly as he could judge, it swung thirty feet or more above the base of the tree. Directly over the head of the suspended body appeared a hoisting block, from which descended a thin black thread parallel with the pole. At the foot of the tree the line passed through another block at right angles, and then out and beyond the camera's range.

"Seems to me they strung him pretty high," was the first comment Willie ventured, after absorbing these details.

"Is that distance uncommon?" Mr. Dix wanted to know.

"I'm not an expert on lynching, but I think a person would strangle as readily three feet in air as thirty."

"Now that you speak of it, they did waste some rope," said the postmaster, taking another thoughtful squint at the picture. "The vigilantes were mostly seamen in their day and used to long hoists, like top-gallant yards. That might account for a lofty taste in hanging."

After confessing this one fault of the vigilantes, Mr. Dix grew drowsy. He adopted an intermittent doze style of narrative, and finished the story in jerks and starts.

"It was all about a wedding. The groom didn't see fit to invite Tom Codder, and he got sullen drunk."

"How it must have stung him," said Willie.

"Fisher, the Trader, arrived that day, and he and Tom were hoisting the gin in that place where you saw the epitaph. Codder had borrowed Fisher's knife to cut tobaco, and, while the Trader had his head back taking a nip, Codder jammed the blade into him. Then his head hit."

Mr. Dix slumbered a few moments.

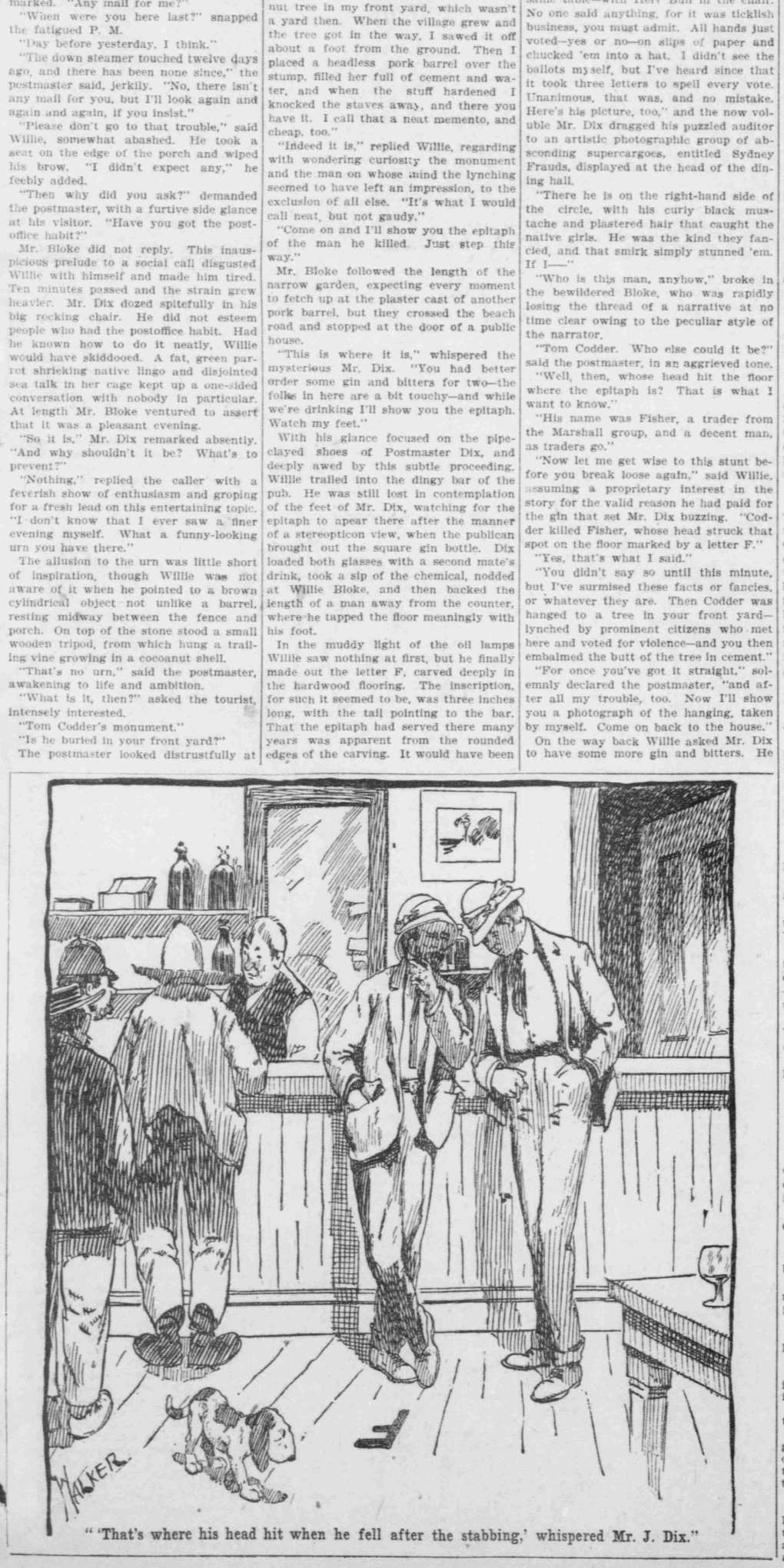
"Why he did it no one ever knew. The Trader just landed that day, and was the only white man on the island, except Codder, who was not invited to the wedding. Perhaps Tom feared the bridegroom would hear about Fisher and invite him before morning. Anyhow, the murderer fled to an American schooner in the harbor and claimed protection under the flag. When the vigilantes went out at midnight to fetch him, Tom, not knowing what was wanted, said: 'All right, gents, wait till I get my shoes.'"

A spell of inward chuckling aroused Mr. Dix to the repartee point.

"'Never mind the shoes,' said the leader; 'your feet won't get hurt.'"

"I should say they wouldn't!" said Willie, gazing at the bare toes dangling thirty feet above sea level. The only answer from the rocker was a snore. Mr. Bloke passed out dizzilly, and fell over the pork barrel monument on his way home.

"After which he stopped to light a pipe and scratch his head for clues."



"'That's where his head hit when he fell after the stabbing,' whispered Mr. J. Dix."

WHAT DID MR. Y. SAY?

He Sought the Fan, but Could Not Find It.

From Tit-Bits.

They had just three minutes to catch the tram, and were at the gate when Mrs. Younglove halted and said:

"There, I have come away without my fan; won't you run back and fetch it, dear? I cannot get along without it, and ——" but Younglove was already bounding upstairs three steps at a time.

"It is there on the dressing case," Mrs. Younglove screeched after him. "Hurry, or we shall miss the tram."

Half a minute later Younglove puts his head out of a window and says:

"Where did you say it was?"

"On the dressing case."

"I cannot find it there."

"I am sure I left it there."

"Well, it's not there now."

"Look in the green box in the left-hand corner of the upper drawer. Perhaps I did not take it out, but I—hurry, George; it's time for the tram."

"I can't find it in the drawer," cries George, half a minute later.

"Well, that's strange; it must be there."

"I have turned everything out of the box, and it's not there."

"Oh, well, look in the blue box in the next drawer, then, and do hurry. We are late now."

"It's not in the blue box."

"Dear, dear, where can it be? See if I left it on the bed. I must have it, for——"

"It is not near the bed."

"Well, you need not take my head off if it isn't. Look on the mantel. I am sure it's there in some place. If you only——"

"It's not on the mantel. I can't find the thing."

"Oh, you must. I don't see how I can get along without it. Look in the drawer of the wardrobe, and don't mix everything up as you always do. Isn't it there?"

"No, it's not; and I'll——"

"Why, if I haven't it here in my pocket! Dear, dear; and there goes our tram, and there won't be another for a quarter of an hour. Dear me, we might as well stay at home now!"

ROOSTER RAISED BY A CAT.

Catches a Mouse and Eats It, and Is Promoted to Housework.

From the New York Sun.

Ed McCarter, the well-known agriculturist, of Sheepshead Bay, stopped in our office yesterday to hand the editor a late feat of Henry D. Thoreau, his mouse-eating rooster. Ed says his rooster is the only mouse-eating fowl in captivity, and a hurried investigation of chicken coops in The Bronx, Ulmer Park, Manhattan, Flushing, and other parts of our thriving town seems to bear testimony to the truth of Ed's statement.

"I call in the interest of science," announced Ed. "Just after luncheon to-day I was out in the yard raking up the strawberry bed when all of a sudden Henry D. Thoreau made a quick run across the yard in the direction of Canarsie. Sprinting ahead of the rooster was a mouse.

"'He thinks it's a cockroach,' I said to myself.

"'He sure does,' I replied, 'and when he catches up with it he'll see his mistake, and turn his thoughts to other things.'

"But over along the fence, under some dahlia stalks, what do you think happened? Henry D. Thoreau made a fast slam with his beak at the mouse, and the mouse took the count. Then Henry began to swallow his kill. First he dragged the mouse out from under the dahlias, and bracing his feet for a supreme effort, threw his head back, shut his eyes, and tried to gulp the mouse down. Three times he tried and then dropped the little animal and sank down to rest. One big effort now followed, and this time the mouse disappeared in the rooster's throat—all except three-eighths of an inch of the mouse's tail. But with one more swallow the last of the tail disappeared.

"If I had time this afternoon," continued Mr. McCarter, "I'd hustle to the Grand Central and take a train some place to find Ernest Thompson Seton or John Burroughs and give them the facts as I have told them here. But I stopped so long in a cafe over in Broadway on my way up here that it's too late now.

"Once you had a story in your paper about one of my cats taking a fondness to a newly-hatched chick and raising it. That chick was Henry D. Thoreau. Maybe Henry learned the trick in his early boyhood from his foster mother, eh? We're going to keep the rooster in the house now and let him kill and eat mice to his heart's content."

Before Ed departed he paid his subscription for his paper and said the family couldn't begin the day without it. Call again, Ed, whenever you are in our midst.

Good Enough for Louis.

From Chatfield Taylor "Moliere."

The officials of the privy chamber, it appears, showed plainly that it annoyed them to be obliged to eat at the same table with Moliere; so Louis, hearing of their rudeness, said to the actor during the petit-lever:

"I hear you are badly entertained, M. de Moliere, and that my people don't find you good enough to eat with them. Perhaps you are hungry. Sit down here and try my en cas de nuit, (a provision made in the evening in case the royal appetite should suddenly require satisfaction during the night). Then cutting a chicken, and ordering Moliere to be seated, the king helped him to a wing, took one himself, and gave orders that the most favored personages of the court be admitted.

"You see, I am making Moliere eat something," said Louis, for my valets de chambre don't find him good enough company for them."

Getting Full Value for Idols.

From the New York Sun.

"I hope I'm never called on again to adjust the loss on a busted Chinese joss," said an insurance man who has just come back from San Francisco. "While my company had pretty fair luck in the earthquake and fire we did have a joss house on the list, with about a hundred assorted sizes of gods in it, every one of them insured to the limit. This joss house went down flat as a pancake, and there wasn't a whole limb left on any of the gods. We've finally made a settlement, but you can bet your life the Chinamen are getting a whole lot nearer their own valuation of the gods than mine, for the simple reason that we want to continue doing business with the Chinese joss houses."

SELECTIONS OF HUMOR FROM ACROSS THE SEAS.

Don't Believe It.

It was the year 1996. There had been many changes. Among other things, the duties of policemen had been undertaken by members of the fair sex.

After a desperate struggle one of these brave ladies had arrested two thieves single-handed.

"Don't resist," she hissed; "if you do, I shall shoot."

There was an ominous click.

"Don't shoot, lady," said one of the ruffians suavely. "We won't resist; but I just wanted to tell yer that during the chase yer hair's got all untidy, an' yer helmet ain't on straight."

The lady flushed with embarrassment.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed. "Where is there a mirror? I could never think of going along the road like this. Wait here until I return."

And the thieves slipped off in the shadows while their captor went to find a mirror.—Smith's Weekly.

In a Few Words.

It was a club for business girls, and at one of the evening meetings an address was given by a well-known lady, in whom commercial and literary ability was admirably balanced.

"Tell us, in a few words, how to be successful," said one of the girls, after the speech was finished.

"To attain success," said the lady, "all we women have to do is to make as much a business of our own business as we do of the things that are none of our business."—Smiles.

Hit Back.

He—Look here! I've been working like a dog all day at the office, and I don't intend to come home to crying children and an overdone dinner.

She—And so I suppose you think that just because you have been working like a dog all day, you may growl like one all evening!—Cassell's Journal.

The Unfeeling Wretch.

"Oh, yes, I'll give your mother a good time while she's here—I'll take her for motor bus rides every day!"

"But, Harold, isn't that dangerous?"

"Oh, I don't mind that, dear—I'm willing to risk it, under the circumstances!"—Sketchy Bits.

An Apprehension.

"I suppose you are pleased that your daughter is to marry so distinguished a European nobleman?"

"Well," answered Mr. Cumrox, "I don't know. When my great grandchildren look at my picture, I don't suppose they will ever forgive me for not wearing a big feather on my hat or a tin waistcoat, so as to look like a regular ancestor."—Sketchy Bits.

Conscience Busy.

The other day a stranger thus addressed a passenger near a railway station in a provincial town:

"You will excuse me, sir, but isn't this——"

The passenger, without waiting for the other to finish, responded:

"Your umbrella? Well, I presume it is, sir. You will allow me to explain that I picked it up on coming out of the train just now. I have great pleasure in restoring it to the rightful owner."

The stranger expressed his thanks, and quickly made off.

A few minutes later the same stranger, with a brand new umbrella tucked carefully under his arm, asked another individual the same question he had intended to ask the man who handed him the umbrella:

"You will excuse me, sir, but isn't this the nearest way to Albert square?"—Smith's Weekly.

Improvement in Business.

"Margaret, my dear," said old Jones, when Mr. Wilkins called for about the hundredth time, "I think you had better go up to the drawing-room, Mr. Wilkins wants to talk to me about a stock exchange deal we have on—just a little matter of business."

"Can't I stay, papa?" asked Margaret. "I should so much like to hear Mr. Wilkins talking business—for once."

It is understood that Mr. Wilkins took the hint that night.—Tit-Bits.

Cause and Effect.

"What caused the trouble between Benson and his wife?"

"They got into a row over a motor-car."

"I didn't know they owned one."

"They didn't. But she wanted one!"—Cassell's Journal.

Hard Lines.

The maiden said "Yes!"
What means his distress
And why does his hope's star grow dim?
The maiden said "Yes!"
When forced to confess
More love for his rival than him.
—Smiles.

No Wonder.

He (quizzingly)—You were awfully nervous when we were married.

She—Well, any other woman would have been nervous when she was being married to you.—Tit-Bits.

The Joke Worked.

A citizen of Wakefield, who recently became the proud father of a son, humorously wrote to his brother:

"A handsome boy has come to my house, and claims to be your nephew. We are doing our best to give him the welcome due to such a relation."

Promptly came the reply:

"Any one who was not an absolute fool would know enough of his brother's affairs to realize that I have not got a nephew. The young man is an impudent impostor.

"I strongly advise you either to kick him out of the house, or to give him in charge."—Smiles.

Too Severe a Test.

"Your highness," said the menial, "the man with the bullet-proof shirt is waiting in the anteroom."

"Show him in."

Meekly the inventor entered.

"Has this garment been subjected to every possible test?" inquired the potentate.

"It has, please your majesty."

"Er—has it been through the washing machine at a steam laundry?"

The inventor fell to the floor in a swoon. "Foiled again!" said he as he fell.—Smith's Weekly.

True.

He said: "I've heard that bee stings
Are good for rheumatiz."
He tried one, jumped up fourteen feet,
And hollered: "And they is!"
—Sketchy Bits.

Quite Surprising.

Mr. Slowe—I tell you when I read about some of these wonderful inventions in electricity nowadays it makes me think a little.

Miss Pepper—Yes; isn't it remarkable what electricity can do?—Cassell's Journal.

Had Something Better.

Mistress—Babette, when I was driving in the park the other day I saw a nurse allow a policeman to kiss a child. I hope you never allow such a thing.

Babette—Non, madam; no policeman would think of keesing ze child ven I vas zere.—Tit-Bits.

Returned.

"Why, Muriel," said the first young lady, spitefully, "I do hope you're not ill. You look so much older to-night."

"I'm am quite well, thank you, dear," replied the other. "And you—how improved you are. You look positively young"—Cassell's Journal.

Windsor an Expensive Castle.

From the London Chronicle.

No royal castle has cost the nation more in hard cash than that of Windsor.

When George IV announced his intention of making it a family residence Parliament granted him £300,000 toward the reconstruction. For four years the work went merrily on under fresh grants, and the King then took possession of the private apartments. That did not end the expenditure, however.

By the time William IV had satisfied himself that there was nothing more to be done, the castle had swallowed up close to a million pounds.